

TESTIMONY OF JIM BROWN  
ON BEHALF OF THE MONTANA WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION  
IN SUPPORT OF HB 363  
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## INTRODUCTION

- Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee
  - On behalf of the members of the Montana Wool Growers Association, I rise today in strong support of HB 363.
  - As Representative Cuffe stated, this bill is at the request of the membership of the Montana Wool Growers Association.
  - It is an attempt to ensure that Montana's state-adopted wolf management plan is adequately funded and adequately carried out by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.
  - This bill is a recognition that while the delisting of wolves found within the borders of Montana is presently out of the hands of this legislature, proper management of wolves must still be carried out.
  - While the Montana Wool Growers Association strongly opposed the reintroduction of the gray wolf into Yellowstone Park and Central Idaho in 1995 and 1996, and while the Association still has strong concerns that livestock producers are the ones really paying for the cost of these predators, the reality is that wolves are here to stay.
  - That is why the Wool Growers are offering up and working to enact legislation such as this one that constitute a good faith attempt to actually deal with the management of the wolf species in this State.
  - We are pleased to be the one agriculture and conservation association who is taking an active lead on ensuring that Montana's wolf management plan is implemented, followed and funded.

## BACKGROUND

- With this in mind, as Representative Cuffe stated, the federal government approved Montana's wolf conservation and management plan in January 2004.
- When the State of Montana studied the environmental consequences of adopting a wolf management plan, it recognized that the wolf had, was, and will kill livestock in Montana.
- Further, when adopting the wolf management plan, the State of Montana recognized that the presence of the wolf on Montana's landscape would have a negative financial impact on Montana's farming and ranching community – decreasing Montana agriculture income and increasing the cost of doing business for Montana's farmers and ranchers.
- I have brought with me the relevant portions of the EIS for the Committee's review.
- The environmental review recognized that livestock owners would be the ones to suffer most directly from the push to increase wolf populations in Montana.
- The plan also recognized the damage that would be done by the wolf to game populations in Montana, namely elk, deer and moose as a result of reintroduction.

- To mitigate against the damage this was to be, and is being done by, the wolf, the plan called for (1) collaring wolf packs to ensure that wolf population numbers are known and depredating wolves can be quickly identified, (2) providing money to kill problem wolves, (3) to reimburse livestock producers for losses caused by wolves, and (4) to enact programs to prevent wolf-livestock conflicts.
- This legislature has done its job in statutorily enacting and authorizing these provisions.
- However, the programs are seriously underfunded, not funded at all, or are not being carried out adequately.
- Let me briefly discuss each of the three programs:
- First:
  - (1) wolf collaring and tracking – FWP is required by statute to collar every wolf pack in order that (1) the public knows how many wolves there are in Montana, which is critically important to getting wolves off the endangered list, and (2) locating wolves who have depredated against cattle, so that those wolves can be eliminated.
  - The purpose of wolf collaring is sound and the program is being carried out. But, the reality on the ground and in the field is that FWP is not carrying out its statutory mandate to collar, track and count wolves in Montana.
  - In fact, by its own admission, the agency presently can only guess at the location of wolf packs, generally only finds about new packs after they kill livestock, and only guestimates at the number of wolves in Montana.
  - Further, as indicated in the attached article from the Daily Inter Lake from this past Saturday, FWP is indicating its desire to engage in “less radio collaring work.”
  - Since these activities are necessary for the success of Montana’s wolf management plan, FWP should be directing more resources, namely funding, to ensuring that wolves are collared. What’s more, FWP should be encouraged to use collars that contain global positioning system technology.
- Second,
  - (2) the livestock loss and mitigation board, --
  - In order to mitigate the damage done by the presence of the wolf, the Legislature created the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board, whose mission is to minimize predation on livestock, to provide compensation for depredated livestock, and to prevent livestock-wolf conflicts.
  - The mission of the board is sound and the Board, when it has adequate funding, carries out its mission well.
  - However, as just noted, the problem is that the Board has, since its creation in 2007, been seriously underfunded.
  - The problem of underfunding is being compounded by the fact that the number of wolf depredations has exploded over the last several years, to the point that where gray wolf kills on livestock in Montana occurred at the rate of an animal per day in 2009.
  - The sharp increase in wolf depredations has depleted severely the resources of the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board.
  - In 2009, the Board expended \$145,000 of its \$150,000 budget to compensate the ranching community for losses.
  - In 2008, the Board ran out of funds to pay all the 2008 death losses.

- All payments being made by the Board are going for death losses; no money is being spent for the loss prevention mission of the Board. This is a trend that not projected to change in the near future.
- Further, compounding the problem for the ranching community is the fact that only one in eight wolf kills are confirmed, thereby shifting the true cost of wolf management to the farming and ranching community
- When this bill was introduced, a portion of this wolf license money would have been dedicated to this purpose. However, after FWP took the position that using wolf license money for wolf depredation and mitigation purposes was a diversion of FWP revenue that is going to cost the state millions in federal funds, that provision of the bill was struck out.
- Setting aside the question of why the State of Montana continually allows the federal government to dictate state wildlife management policy, the question needs to be asked why the wolf management plan even calls for having a compensation program if it is not going to be funded.
- The question needs to be asked of FWP officials, do they recognize wolf compensation as part of wolf management activities in Montana or not.
- It is my hope that this Legislature will see through the scare tactics used by the Department to ensure there is not proper oversight of FWP's funding sources, and proper direction of those funding sources by this Legislature.
- I know that FWP enjoys being, for the most part, outside of this Legislature's budget process, but coming in with fiscal scare tactics such as hanging a \$20 million fiscal note on this bill, which is designed to carry out the management plan adopted by FWP, is in no way helpful.
- I trust this Committee will consider using wolf license revenue to fund all portions of Montana's wolf management plan.
- Alternatively, I hope members of this Committee will support HB622, sponsored by Representative Ankney, which will allocated \$200,000 each fiscal year from the general fund for carrying out that portion of Montana's wolf management plan to reimburse livestock producers for losses caused by wolf depredations.
- Finally, and third,
- (3) Montana's wolf management calls for killing wolves that depredate and for managing wolf numbers to ensure that big game populations in Montana aren't devastated.
- Well, we are all aware that wolves are depredating livestock in every skyrocketing amounts, and we are all aware of the damage that is being done to hunting opportunities in Montana by the presence of the gray wolf.
- Given that wildlife is publicly owned, the management of predators, such as the wolf, is, and should be, a public responsibility.
- The Wildlife Services division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has been tasked with the important role of controlling wildlife when wildlife causes damage to agriculture or threatens public health and safety or threatens game numbers.
- While USDA personnel do the actual wolf damage management work in Montana, they coordinate closely with personnel from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks who have management authority over such species as mountain lions, black bears and wolves.

- MWGA works closely with Wildlife Services personnel and considers those personnel to be effective partners in the sheep industry's own efforts to use non-lethal predator control methods.
- The Wool Growers strongly supports this cooperative relationship between the State of Montana and the Federal Government to manage wolves.
- What we don't support is how little money is provided by FWP to Wildlife Services to do the actual collaring, killing, and tracking work.
- Presently, FWP provides only \$110,000 for this kind of work and it's not because FWP necessarily wants to give this money to Wildlife Services.
- Believe it or not, this money was made possible and available for wolf work due to the fact that the Montana Wool Growers Association secured such funding from the legislature years ago for predator control work.
- Given that Montana's ranchers and farmers work with this agency almost on a weekly, if not monthly, basis, 'we' understand that this agency is not being fully compensated for the Montana wolf management work it does.
- This is borne out by the fact that wildlife services had to stop doing wolf management work last fall because the agency ran out of funds. Further, federal monies secured by Montana's congressional delegation for Montana's wolf management work was eliminated in the most recent federal continuing resolution. This was a loss of some \$220,000 that went to Montana, through Wildlife Services, for wolf management work.
- This lack of, and loss of, funding for this critically important work is a problem that needs to be redressed, and redressed immediately.

- As has been mentioned earlier, all three of these programs just referenced are authorized under the Montana wolf management plan and authorized under authority of state law.
- Therefore, the fact that these programs are not being properly carried out or implemented is not the result of a failure on the part of the legislature to see the problem and provide the necessary implementation authority.
- Rather, in the opinion of the Montana Wool Grower's Association, the fact that we are having so many problems 'on the ground' in terms of managing wolves is a product of FWP not dedicating enough resources to the problem, not making these programs a priority and a problem of funding.
- In the planning documents supporting the wolf management plan, it was estimated that roughly \$900,000 to \$1 million would be needed to manage wolves in Montana every year.
- The government was supposed to fund the majority of this wolf management cost. But, the state was, and is, supposed to kick in financially as well. The State has not done enough to meet its obligations, and the Wool Growers is concerned about how FWP is allocating money received from the federal government for wolf management.
- The Wool Growers believes that Representative Cuffe's bill is a major step forward in redressing both the management and funding shortfall problems.
- The bill makes sense in terms of policy because it directs that the revenue generated by the hunting of wolves should be directed solely to the management of that species.

- The bill also makes sense in that it provides a dedicated and continual stream of revenue to carrying out the specific provisions of the wolf management program.
- This bill makes sense because it helps FWP with its present wolf management responsibilities by dedicating revenue to wolf management now.
- This bill makes sense because it is forward looking in that ensures that, once the wolf comes off the endangered species list [which really is just a question of time] that Montana is prepared financially to deal with the problem.
- In sum, this bill is good public policy.

#### CONCLUSION:

- MWGA members understand wildlife plays an enriching role in our lives. That is why MWGA's membership has taken an active role in working with FWP in crafting and enacting Montana's first ever Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy, in providing hunters with access across their lands, and why the membership has worked closely with FWP on wildlife habit issues.
- However, knowing the economic devastation that is being done by the gray wolf in Montana both to agriculture interests and to hunting opportunities, MWGA's membership has sought to be active this legislature in pushing you, our elected officials, to find funding sources and to direct funding to carry out proper wolf management in Montana.
- Providing a dedicated source of funding for wolf collaring, wolf compensation, and wolf mitigation is vital both to the economic survival of Montana's top economic industry — the livestock industry and to the success of Montana's game populations.
- We thank Representative Cuffe for recognizing the problems this bill is trying to address and for being an advocate for us on this issue.
- On behalf of MWGA's membership, I respectfully request this Committee pass this legislation and send it to the House floor for full consideration.
- With the Chair's permission I will submit my written testimony for the record, which such testimony includes several Montana Wool Growers Associations Resolutions on wolf management.
- I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

#### *MONTANA WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION RESOLUTIONS*

##### Conservation Licenses (2010)

Whereas USDA Wildlife Service's funding is not adequate to allow them to conduct as efficient a predator damage control program in Montana as would be possible with adequate funding,

Whereas USDA WS wolf damage management work has increased substantially since 2003 with no new funding,

Whereas the Federal protection given to wolves significantly limit the type of control tools USDA WS can use,

Whereas Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks provides only \$110,000 to USDA WS for wolf work and that money was originally designated for USDA WS to benefit wildlife, mostly big game,

Whereas, hunters are suffering the consequences of increasing wolf depredations on big game species and should assist in funding predator damage management activities in Montana since such activities greatly enhance the production and survival of big game species and upland birds,

Whereas, without the ability of the USDA WS to control wolves that prey on livestock there will be increased depredations on wildlife,

Therefore be it resolved, the MWGA supports legislation adding a minimum of \$1.00 fee to all conservation licenses sold in Montana, with the proceeds going to predator damage management operations. These funds are above and beyond funds previously allocated to USDA WS.

#### Wolf Depredation Funding (2010)

Whereas, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) receives over \$600,000 annually from the USFWS for wolf management,

Whereas, USDA WS does all of the wolf damage management in Montana,

Whereas, USDA WS receive inadequate funding to deal with all the predator problems in the state,

Whereas MFWP provides USDA WS with only \$110,000 for wolf management when wolf activities are costing USDA WS over \$400,000 per year,

Whereas this \$110,000 is not new funding, but was historically provided by MFWP to USDA WS for protection of antelope and deer,

Whereas, MFWP has not done enough to protect Montana's livestock from wolf depredations except to authorize USDA WS to do all the predator control work.

Therefore be it resolved that the MWGA request and support legislative actions by Congress to redirect US Department of the Interior, USFWS funding for wolf management from MFWP to USDA WS where it can be used to protect livestock from all wolf depredation.

#### Wolf Delisting (2010)

The MWGA supports Federal Legislation that would delist wolves and transfer management to the States.

#### Fish, Wildlife Funding (2007)

MWGA recognizes the importance of predator control on game populations and encourages the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and legislature, to continue, and increase, funding for predator control.

Furthermore, MWGA believes this funding should be used in areas where there is a secondary benefit to protect livestock from predators and that WS should have some discretion where that work is done.

#### Wildlife Services Funding for Wolf Control (2007)

The MWGA opposes any effort to shift existing predator control funds to wolf management, or control. These needs should be funded with additional Federal monies.

#### Collaring of Wolves for Monitoring (2008)

The Montana Wool Growers Association request that the agencies responsible for wolf management must continue the collaring of wolf packs mandated by Montana Code "*MCA 87-5-132 Use of radio tracking collars for monitoring wolf packs*"

Funding should not come from traditional predator control used for the protection of private property and livestock.

# Wolves kill 120 sheep at ranch near Dillon

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Wolves kill 120 sheep at ranch near Dillon

By EVE BYRON of the Helena Independent Record [missoulain.com](#) | Posted: Friday, August 28, 2009 6:30 am | [Loading...](#)

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HELENA - While the debate about how many wolves are enough to ensure a healthy population will again come to a head in a federal courtroom Monday, a Dillon-area ranch is picking up the pieces from the largest known wolf depredation in recent history.

In a highly unusual move for wolves, they killed about 120 adult male sheep in one incident on the Rebish/Konen Livestock Ranch south of Dillon last week.

That compares with a total of 111 sheep killed by wolves in Montana in 2008, according to Carolyn Sime, the statewide wolf coordinator for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

"This is one of the most significant losses that I've seen," Sime said. "That situation is really unfortunate."



Suzanne Stone with Defenders of Wildlife added that in the 20 years she's been working toward ensuring healthy wolf populations, this is the first time she's heard of such a mass killing.

"I've heard of bears or mountain lions doing that, but what usually happens is the sheep panic and jump on top of one another or fall into a ditch and suffocate," Stone said. "I've never heard of any situation where wolves killed so much livestock in such a short period of time.

"... This is the most extreme case I've ever heard about."

The ranch has suffered confirmed wolf depredations twice in three weeks. In late July, three wolves - two blacks and a gray - killed at least 26 rams. The gray wolf was lethally shot by a federal wildlife manager, and one of the blacks was injured. They thought that would scare off the rest of the pack.

Last week, wolves struck again. This time, they took out 120 purebred Rambouillet bucks that ranged in size from about 150 to 200 pounds, and were the result of more than 80 years of breeding.

"We went up to the pasture on Thursday (Aug. 20) - we go up there every two or three days - and everything was fine," rancher Jon Konen said. "The bucks were in the pasture; I had about 100 heifers with them on 600 acres."

He had some business to attend to in Billings, so Konen told his son to be sure to check on the livestock while he was gone.

"He called me, and said it was a mess up there. He said there were dead bucks all up and down the creek. We went up there the next day and tried to count them, but there were too many to count," Konen recalled.

"I had tears in my eyes, not only for myself but for what my stock had to go through," he added. "They were running, getting chewed on, bit and piled into a corner. They were bit on the neck, on the back, on the back of the hind leg.

"They'd cripple them, then rip their sides open."

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has taken the lead in wolf management from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and the state agency has a "memorandum of understanding" with the federal Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services to provide damage management services when livestock are killed by wolves.

After the dead sheep were found, Graeme McDougal with Wildlife Services flew in a small plane over the sheep pasture, looking for the one or two remaining black wolves to complete the control work requested by Montana FWP. Within a half-mile of the sheep pasture, he spotted the Centennial pack of three adult gray wolves and five pups.

McDougal shot and killed the one uncollared adult wolf, but wasn't authorized to remove any more wolves.

This was the first known depredation incident for the Centennial pack in 2009.

Konen doesn't want to wade into the debate over the reintroduction of wolves in the Rockies, but said that in his opinion, it's time to stop managing wolves and start controlling them.

"My bucks were on private ground, in a pasture where we've been pasturing them for 50 years. The wolves were intruders that were in the wrong place," he said.

Wolves were recently taken off the list of animals protected under the Endangered Species Act, and both Montana and Idaho have instituted hunting seasons for them this year. Idaho will allow 265 wolves to be taken by hunters, in a season that starts Tuesday. Montana will allow 75 wolves to be taken, with the season starting Sept. 15.

Montana is home to an estimated 500 wolves, while Idaho has at least 850. Wyoming also has wolves, but they remain under Endangered Species Act protection.

In Stone's opinion, hunting wolves could create even more problems for ranchers.

"If the adults are shot, then the young ones are dispersed too early," Stone said. "Young pups on their own might turn to livestock to survive, and that's not a good situation for anybody."

Her organization has put out a book to educate ranchers on proactive steps they can take to prevent livestock loss, like hiring range riders, hanging "fladry" - closely spaced cloth - on fences, and minimizing attractants such as dead carcasses.

Defenders of Wildlife has spent more than \$895,000 since 1998 to help pay for installation of nonlethal methods to prevent conflicts.

Since 1987, they've also made 885 payments totaling \$1.35 million to ranchers to compensate for livestock killed by wolves.

In Montana, the Legislature has earmarked \$150,000 to compensate ranchers for livestock lost to wolves, and U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., co-sponsored a bill that includes \$5 million in federal funding over five years for depredation losses.

George Edwards, state livestock loss mitigation coordinator, said the Rebish/Konen Ranch probably will receive \$350 per dead sheep.

But he added that the loss is more than just monetary to ranchers.

"The compensation still doesn't make up for the loss by any means," Edwards said. "The rancher still needs to make up his breeding stock, and people in town may not realize the attachment livestock folk get to their animals. The emotional toll it takes is just indescribable."

## New method may provide better wolf estimates

JIM MANN/Daily Inter Lake | Posted: Saturday, April 2, 2011 2:00 am

Monitoring wolf populations has never been easy and it's gotten more difficult in recent years with an expanding wolf population in Montana, but now there's interest in putting a new method to work, possibly as soon as this year.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks officials have been working with the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Montana for the last few years to develop a "patch occupancy modeling" for wolves, a method that relies heavily on an annual hunter survey.

Currently, population estimates depends on the work of state wolf management specialists such as Kent Laudon, who covers an area of about 10,000 square miles in Northwest Montana.

That work involves trapping and fitting wolves with radio collars and tracking those collars to monitor packs. Visual sightings result in annual minimum population estimates that no longer accurately reflect the actual number of wolves on the landscape.

"We've always had this minimum count but it's kind of outlived its utility," said Laudon, who has been monitoring wolves in Northwest Montana since 2004. "When there weren't so many packs on the landscape, it was practical at that time."

But as of last spring, there were 39 wolf packs in Northwest Montana, and Laudon can no longer keep up with all of them, much less keep track of pack reproduction and mortality data.

"Really it just gets beyond human effort thresholds," Laudon said.

Enter patch occupancy modeling, a statistical population monitoring method that was first applied to amphibians. In this case, it would be used to determine the number of wolves, packs and breeding pairs.

"It's relatively new and it's based on some simple notions," explained Mike Mitchell, leader of the cooperative research unit. "If you go looking for animals in an area, you're not always going to see them even if they are there."

Occupancy modeling involves estimating the probability of detection and compensating for animals that may be missed by field observations.

Submitted  
by Jim  
Brown  
to  
Chief  
of File  
Montana  
Wolf  
Crew  
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"Wolves are helpful because they are highly territorial," Mitchell said. Pack territories of about 250 square miles have been applied as patches in the model.

Laudon said the model also accounts for prey bases and terrain, and it creates probabilities for areas to be colonized by wolves as well as probabilities for occupied areas to become unoccupied.

The observations of Montana hunters also are plugged into the model.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has long conducted telephone surveys after every hunting season, but in 2007 the survey included three additional questions: Did you see a wolf or wolves? How many? And where was it seen?

In 2008 and 2009, about 80,000 hunters were contacted, a healthy sample for statistical purposes, and each year there were about 2,400 wolf sightings statewide, Mitchell said, stressing that the number includes repeat sightings where the same animals are seen by more than one hunter.

Mitchell contends that hunter statistics are invaluable.

"This is a level of observation that there's just no way we could replicate in any other way on the landscape," he added.

The data collected by Laudon and his counterparts also is an important component that may not always be available. The whole modeling project was started partly in anticipation that wolf delisting would eventually lead to less money to maintain the current level of monitoring.

"You need some field validation of what the model is telling you ... while we still have pretty darned detailed information, we're using that to calibrate our model to make sure it is as representative of reality as we can get," Mitchell said.

Laudon and others involved with wolf management have long stressed that the minimum count does not account for all the wolves on the landscape, and he anticipates the model will provide a more accurate picture of the population.

"It doesn't necessarily mean we are abandoning the minimum count," Laudon said. "The hope is that it will become better, estimating closer to an actual population rather than a minimum."

Mitchell said the model does reflect more wolves than the most recent minimum count, but he declined to provide numbers, because the work was recently submitted for a peer-reviewed publication and that process is not complete.

Once published, he anticipates it will be influential in the arena of the Endangered Species Act, where "the best available science" is an important standard.

"Whenever something comes out in peer-review literature that goes into the pool of available science," Mitchell said, adding that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials have supported the modeling work.

~~If it's implemented in Montana, Laudon expects he and his colleagues will see some practical benefits, starting with less radio collaring work.~~

"Instead of me being married to a trapline, I can be more flexible and mobile," he said. "It would give me more time to search for new packs."

Fewer radio collars means less expensive monitoring flights. And he pointed out that patch occupancy modeling also is expected to improve the state's ability to set appropriate hunting quotas when state management over wolves is restored.

Quotas vary from one wolf management unit to the next, and from one year to the next, depending on how populations are faring in different parts of the state.

Reporter Jim Mann may be reached at 758-4407 or by email at [jmann@dailyinterlake.com](mailto:jmann@dailyinterlake.com).

## Wolves & Livestock



Montana's plan to conserve and manage the state's recovered gray wolf population was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in January 2004.

FWP works closely with USDA Wildlife Services (WS) the agency that investigates suspected wolf depredations and contributes its expertise to resolve wolf-livestock conflicts. Activities by FWP, WS, and private citizens are guided by federal regulations.

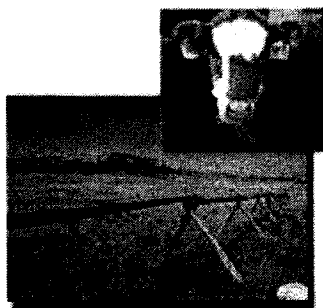
Montanans are encouraged to contact FWP to:

- learn more about the wolves in their area;
- learn more about the what you can do to protect your livestock;
- seek assistance to avert or resolve a wolf-related conflicts.



[Contact the Wolf Team](#)

## About wolves and livestock in Montana



- [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (PDF 295 KB)
- [A Recent History of Wolf-Livestock in Montana: 1987-2006](#) (PDF 1.5 MB)
  - [Federal Regulations](#) (PDF 141 KB)
- [Montana's Wolf Reimbursement Program](#) (PDF 31 KB)

## Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Plan



- Preparing to Manage Wolves in Montana
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  - The Prey: Deer, Elk & Moose
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- Compensation for Livestock Injuries and Losses
  - Public Safety

### Preparing to Manage Wolves in Montana

Q. What is the wolf conservation and management effort all about and why are Montana, Idaho and Wyoming involved?

A. Among the federal requirements for removing the gray wolf from the endangered species list, Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming must have management plans and other regulatory mechanisms in place to maintain the recovered population within the Northern Rocky Mountain Recovery Area.

Q. Are the states fulfilling their federal requirements?

A. No. Montana and Idaho each have federally-approved plans. Montana's effort was characterized as a "class act" by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Federal officials say that delisting in the northern Rockies is held up due to the lack of an approved plan and compatible state laws in Wyoming. Once that situation is resolved, federal authorities say they will take the necessary steps to officially delist the gray wolf. Once delisted, the states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming will each be legally required to sustain its share of a viable wolf population in the northern Rockies.

Q. What issues have emerged in Montana?

A. Through the work of the Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council and subsequent community work sessions throughout Montana in 2002-03, Montanans identified issues related to: wolf management, numbers and distribution; social factors; administration and delisting; prey populations (deer, elk and moose); funding; livestock; wolf habitat; compensation for livestock losses; economics; information and education; human safety; wolf monitoring, and others.

Q. What does the recommended Montana's wolf conservation and management plan seek to establish?

A. The recommended plan, which is an updated version of the Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council recommendations, would create a wolf conservation and management program similar to that for black bears and mountain lions. It would be based on numbers, distribution and public acceptance. Wolf management techniques, and the methods used to resolve conflicts, would be based on a benchmark of 15 breeding pairs in Montana. The plan considers the spectrum of management activities from simple harassment techniques to chase wolves away, to lethal control measures, like offering kill permits to landowners and regulated hunting or trapping. The aim is to sustain the wolf population, Montana's deer and elk populations, and to help resolve wolf-human and wolf-livestock conflicts.

Q. Why did FWP choose to recommend the Updated Council Alternative as the final plan?

A. To best balance the diversity of public interests and desires about wolf conservation and management. The recommended plan is based on the consensus recommendations of the Montana Wolf Advisory Council, a broad array of public comments gathered throughout this EIS process, and advice from wolf experts. It seeks a balance between the biological needs of wolves and the concerns of people.

TOP

### FWP's Role

Q. Will FWP now begin to manage wolves?

A. No. Even after the Record of Decision is signed by FWP Director Jeff Hagener in September, a state plan is just one step FWP and Montana must take in what is expected to be a longer federal process that includes an evaluation of each state's plan and regulations that must together maintain a secure wolf population.

Q. Is FWP going to manage wolves?

A. That is the agency's hope. But FWP won't obtain management authority until wolves are officially delisted. In addition, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service must approve Montana's, Idaho's, and Wyoming's management plans. FWP, however, firmly believes a state-administered conservation and management program can best address the diverse expectations of Montana's citizens.

Q. What are the legal aspects of state-run wolf management?

A. Upon delisting, the gray wolf will be reclassified under state law from "endangered" to a species "in need of management" which establishes the legal mechanism to prevent intentional human-caused mortality outside the immediate defense of life/property. When it becomes clear that the management program is maintaining a secure, viable population, reclassification to big game or furbearer may follow.

Q. Would any other state agency have any legal obligations regarding wolf management?

A. Yes. Montana law assigns joint responsibility to FWP and the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) to manage wildlife that can cause damage to livestock. FWP and MDOL will work together with federal Wildlife Services (formerly Animal Damage Control) to resolve wolf-livestock conflicts.

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### Montana Wolf Numbers

Q. How many wolves are there in the Northern Rocky Mountain Recovery Area?

A. An estimated 835 wolves, in about 110 packs with 66 of those qualifying as breeding pairs, inhabited the northern Rockies recovery area at the end of 2004.

Q. How many wolves are in Montana?

A. Federal officials estimated that 153 wolves, in 40 packs, and about 15 breeding pairs inhabited Montana. These estimates were made in December 2004. Additional wolf packs-and dispersing wolves-may exist but have yet to be confirmed.

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### Funding Wolf Management

Q. What will it cost to manage wolves in Montana?

A. FWP's best estimate for the preferred alternative suggests that it will cost from \$913,000 to \$954,000 annually. Cooperating federal agencies are expected to incur some expenses through the federal budgetary process.

Q. Can FWP fund wolf management in Montana?

A. Not at this time. It is clear existing financial resources are not adequate to manage wolves in Montana. Additional funding will be required to implement all elements of a wolf management program.

Q. How will state wolf management be funded?

A. The recommended plan directs FWP to seek additional funding from special state or federal appropriations, private foundations, or other private sources to supplement funds committed by FWP in amounts similar to those for other native carnivores like black bears and mountain lions. The governors of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming are pursuing a program called the Northern Rocky Mountain Grizzly Bear and Gray Wolf National Management Trust to help the states fund the management of recovered threatened and endangered species. The idea originated in Wyoming. In light of local funding and resource shortfalls, the states hope Congress will recognize the significant national interest in the conservation and management of these species. In the interim, the three states may seek special Congressional appropriations to fund state activities during the transition of management authority.

TOP

### The Prey: Deer, Elk & Moose

Q. Will wolves impact game populations like deer, elk and moose?

A. Yes. How much of an impact is uncertain at this time. Wolves-like mountain lions, coyotes, and bears-eat deer, elk, moose and other game animals. All wildlife populations are variable through time and across a diversity of habitats. Population numbers fluctuate. It won't be the same everywhere all the time. Research in Montana and elsewhere has shown that predation may influence deer, elk and moose populations through changes in the survival of young, the death of adult animals, or a combination of both. For example, if a higher than normal number of female deer die in



any given year from things such as hunting or a severe winter, local conditions could allow wolves and other predators to keep that deer herd's numbers suppressed or slow its population growth.

Q. Will wolves affect hunting in Montana?

A. They probably will in some places. As with other population effects, however, there is no clear answer except that wolves will add another factor to consider among all the environmental and social factors wildlife biologists wrestle with every year in setting harvest limits on big game. Hunting opportunities are then adjusted in response to all factors combined. Wolves may affect some local, deer, elk or moose populations. When predation is combined with unfavorable environmental conditions-like drought or a severe winter-it may affect hunter opportunities in that area.

Q. How will FWP assess whether wolves are adversely affecting a big game population and how will it respond?

A. Monitoring programs will help FWP detect changes in both wolf and prey populations. While a direct cause/effect relationship between wolf predation and prey-population decline is difficult to pinpoint with certainty, in light of other environmental factors, FWP would consider reducing the size of the wolf population in a localized area. Wolf management decisions would also be paired with other management actions to reduce prey mortality - like adjusting hunter opportunity or more aggressive management of other predator species such as mountain lions. Parallel management efforts for predators and prey would continue until the deer, elk, or moose population rebounded and environmental conditions are favorable.

TOP

## **Wolves and Livestock**

Q. What will livestock producers be able to do to protect their livestock under state management authority?

A. Under the recommended plan, management tools are intended to decrease livestock depredations. Livestock producers would be offered assistance to reduce depredation risks, and they would be allowed to harass wolves, or to kill wolves caught attacking, killing or threatening their stock. In addition, to remove a wolf causing chronic conflicts, a livestock producer could receive a special kill permit. All such incidents must be reported to FWP and an investigation would follow. This is consistent with current state laws that address protection of human life and private property when they are in imminent danger from wildlife.

Q. What impacts will wolves have on livestock or stockgrowers?

A. From 1995-2004, authorities confirmed 167 cattle, 397 sheep, 25 dogs and nine llamas were lost to wolf depredation in Montana. Some stockgrowers, however, have experienced other "unconfirmed" losses they suspect were due to wolves. So far, most depredation incidents investigated by Wildlife Services within Montana occurred on private land. Although wolves cause a small number of the total livestock losses in Montana compared to other sources of livestock mortality-like weather, disease, and reproductive problems-personal financial losses may result directly from wolf depredation. Indirect costs may accumulate because of increased management activities, changes in husbandry practices, injured livestock, or uncompensated losses. These financial hardships accrue to individual farmers and ranchers and may be significant to them.

TOP

## **Compensation for Livestock Injuries and Losses**

Q. Will farmers and ranchers get compensated if wolves injure or kill livestock when wolves are managed by Montana?

A. The recommended plan directs the State of Montana to develop, in cooperation with livestock producers and private groups, an entity to administer and fund a compensation program for damages caused by wolves. Compensation is critical to maintaining tolerance for wolves by livestock producers who experience financial losses due to wolves.

Q. How will this program be funded?

A. That will be determined by the work accomplished by the State of Montana, livestock producers and private groups who will seek to create an entity to administer and fund a compensation program for damages caused by wolves.

Q. Doesn't the Defenders of Wildlife already have a program to compensate farmers and ranchers when wolves injure or kill livestock?

A. Yes, but Defenders of Wildlife may end the program when wolves are delisted. Livestock producers have been compensated for confirmed losses at fair market value and 50% of market value for probable losses at the time of death and at fall value for young of the year. Between 1987 and 2001, Defenders of Wildlife paid more than \$81,000 for all confirmed and probable wolf-caused losses in Montana.

TOP

## Public Safety

Q. Should Montanans be concerned about public safety?

A. Wolves generally fear people and rarely pose a threat to human safety. In the past 100 years, there have been several published accounts of human injuries, but no fatalities, due to wolves. It is, however, unusual for a wild wolf to associate or interact with people, linger near buildings, livestock, or domestic dogs. This behavior is more typical of a released captive wolf, a wolf habituated to a domestic food source or wolf-dog hybrid. Wild wolves generally have some place to be and something to do and do not seek out or loiter around areas of human settlement.

Q. What should Montanans do if they see a wolf?

A. You can report wolf sightings to your local FWP office or to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 406-449-5225.

Despite their wariness of people, wolves will still use natural habitats in close proximity to humans, particularly in forested and other settings that have come to be called "urban-wildland interface." For this reason, we are more likely to see gray wolves than other large carnivores such as mountain lions or black bears. Wolves will commonly use roads, utility corridors, and railroad rights-of-way as travel routes. Tracks and scats are often found on roads. Wolves also feed and rest in open areas with good visibility, whereas lions tend to hide their kills and feed or rest in dense vegetation. Wolves will also travel across openings in forest cover or natural meadows in ways that mountain lions or bears do not. And because wolves live in packs, more than one may be seen at a time.

TOP

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 7, 2011

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20050

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write today to respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continue to fund the essential Tri-State Predator Control Program of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services. Fifty percent of Montana's economy is tied to ranching and farming agriculture, particularly cattle and sheep production. Many Montanans rely on successful livestock production for their livelihoods, and predator management is vital to that success.

Montana is blessed with a beautiful landscape and abundant wildlife populations. Unfortunately, at times our wildlife populations can be one of the greatest threats to our livestock industry. The livestock protection programs of the USDA Wildlife Services have been imperative to managing those populations. In Montana alone, livestock losses account for several million dollars in lost revenue each year.

As you know, Congress recently passed a two week Continuing Resolution which will fund the government until March 18, 2011. The Continuing Resolution would eliminate funding to the Tri-State Predator Control Program. This program is vital to the state's management of predators, and the cut could not have come at a worse time for Montana's ranchers and farmers as calving and lambing season is currently in full swing.

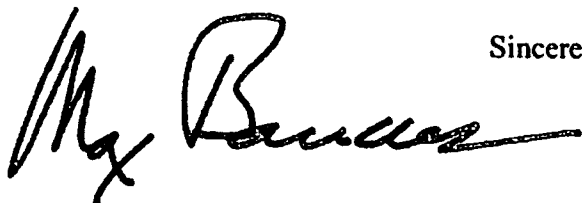
The Tri-State Predator Control Program is an important funding partner with state and local governments and livestock producers in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Loss of this funding is a serious setback to maintain the Wildlife Services program and the professional staff that work to protect livestock in the states. We fear that without adequately funding the support the existing livestock protection programs in Montana, predation management expertise will be lost and livestock grazing in some areas will be jeopardized.

In years past, the funds have been divided between the three states to aid their efforts in managing and controlling all predators. The funds have been especially helpful in assisting with the ever increasing costs and demands upon the states' Wildlife Services programs due to the exploding populations of federally introduced wolves in the states.

We understand the tough economic times across the country and the pressure all government agencies are facing as they try to trim their budgets. However, we strongly encourage your continued effort to keep strong funding for the livestock protection programs in Montana.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Max Baucus  
U.S. Senator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester  
U.S. Senator

## FY 2012 PROPOSED APPROPRIATION BY LINE ITEM

February 2011

The President's FY 2012 Budget provides for \$832.706M for the APHIS. The President's Budget request is based on a FY 2011 year-long Continuing Resolution incorporating changes from the FY 2011 President's Budget which included the elimination of Congressional Directives totaling \$24.410M from the FY 2010 Appropriation.

### WS OPERATIONS

The President's FY 2012 proposed budget for the WS Operations line item includes an overall line item decrease of \$3.671M from the President's FY 2011 proposed budget and a \$10.436M decrease from the FY 2010 Appropriation. The budget request includes a Program directed reduction of \$2.75M and the elimination of pay costs.

#### WS Operations Line Item Overview:

FY 2010 Appropriation	\$77,780,000
FY 2011 Continuing Resolution 42.47%	
FY 2011 President's Budget	\$71,015,000
Elimination of Directives	- \$6,640,000
Delta States Operations (\$223,000)	
MS Beaver Mgmt (\$496,000)	
MO Crop & Aquaculture (\$207,000)	
LA Rice Damage (\$94,000)	
WI, MN, MI Wolf Predation Mgmt (\$727,000)	
NC Beaver Mgmt (\$208,000)	
MI Cormorant Mgmt (\$139,000)	
VT Cormorant Mgmt (\$103,000)	
PA Coop. Livestock Protection (\$223,000)	
WV Integrated Predation Mgmt (\$280,000)	
ND/SD Blackbirds (\$265,000)	
HI WS (Operations & Research) (\$2.23M)	
MT, ID, WY Predator Mgmt (\$926,000)	
SD Wildlife Services (\$519,000)	
Increase in Cooperator Cost Share	- \$2,408,000
Authority for Safety Improvements	+ \$1,362,000
Increase for Pay Costs	+ \$921,000
FY 2012 President's Proposed Changes:	
Program Directed Reduction	- \$2,670,000
Elimination of Pay Costs	- <u>\$921,000</u>
Overall FY 2012 Change	- \$3,716,000
FY 2012 President's Budget	<u><b>\$67,424,000</b></u>

## LLRMB FUNDS TIMELINE

2007 Legislature creates LLRMB and LLRMP with a \$30,000 appropriation.

2008 Defenders of Wildlife provides a \$50,000 donation.

2008 An additional \$3,000 is donated by various organizations including Montana Cattlemens Association, Keystone Conservation and Western Wolf Coalition.

2008 All \$83,000 paid to livestock owners for death loss, LLRMB ran out of funds to pay all 2008 death loss claims.

2009 Defenders of Wildlife provides an additional \$50,000 donation in the spring. The board paid the remaining 2008 loss claims. 2008 total is \$87,318 on 238 animals.

2009 Legislature provides a \$150,000 biennial appropriation.

2009 Total claims were paid on 370 animals amounting to \$144,996.

2010 LLRMB is still only able to pay on confirmed and probable death losses. Donated funds and state appropriations all spent by June.

2010 LLRMB receives a federal appropriation of \$140,000 to be used as directed by the board. Total 2010 death loss claims as of February 11, 2011 is \$98,813 paid on 174 animals. Past trends indicate additional 2010 loss claims will continue to be received until May 2010.

2010 Additional federal funding was not included in the Department of Interiors budget as submitted.

2011 One claim has been paid with at value of \$802.

Total funds from major donations and governmental appropriations are \$423,000. Total payments from May 2008 to February 2011 are \$331,929.

The board has approximately \$77,500 funds remaining to pay death loss claims.

An agreement was made with Defenders of Wildlife to provide \$4,750 towards prevention upon the board receiving any federal funding.

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Today's 600lb steer calf average value is \$148 per pound or \$888.00 each

Ewes \$249 and Lambs \$200

Guard dog \$1,030

Herding dog \$1,500

If 7X multiplier applied, animal values would have been \$2,649,016 for the 22 month time period that the board has been paying claims.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' 2010 annual wolf program report summarizes efforts to implement the approved state plan during the first 7 months of 2010 and to the extent allowed by federal regulations after the wolf was relisted in August. Throughout the year, FWP led wolf monitoring, directed conflict management, coordinated research, and led outreach efforts. FWP works closely with Tribes, a variety of other state and federal agencies, interested organizations and individuals to continue the transition to managing wolves like other wildlife. Wolves were delisted in May, 2009. Wolves were relisted on August 5, 2010.

Montana's wolf conservation and management plan is based on the work of the wolf advisory council, a diverse working group. Its balanced approach ensures the long-term success of wolf recovery in a landscape where people live, work, and recreate. The plan seeks to manage the wolf population in concert with available habitat, prey species, livestock conflicts, and human safety - similar to Montana's other resident wildlife.

## 2010 Highlights

### Wolf Numbers

- The population is secure but dynamic. Wolves share a landscape with people. Like other wildlife species, Montana's wolf population is subject to checks and balances, including strong reproduction in some areas, disease, vehicle strikes, and mortality due to conflicts with people.
- As of Dec. 31, 2010, FWP documented at least 566 wolves in 108 verified packs, 35 of which qualified as a "breeding pair." That's about an 8% increase from last year, compared to 4% in 2009 when total wolf mortality (including public harvest) appeared to slow down the rate of population growth. Wolf population growth rate picked up in 2010, due in part to the inability to proactively manage the population through fair chase, regulated hunting. A minimum of 140 pups were documented in 2010.
- The wolf population in each of the three areas grew slightly in 2010 and is distributed as follows:
  - Northwest Montana: at least 326 wolves in 68 packs, 21 breeding pairs.
  - Western Montana: at least 122 wolves in 21 packs, 8 breeding pairs.
  - Southwestern Montana: at least 118 wolves in 19 packs, 6 breeding pairs.
  - One and five packs occur on the Blackfeet and Flathead Indian reservations, respectively.
- Twenty-four packs straddle the Montana/Idaho border, and 18 of them are counted in Montana. Six others are counted in the Idaho population. Six packs straddle the Montana/Wyoming border, and four of them are counted in the Montana population.
- A total of 179 wolf mortalities were documented in Montana in 2010, 79% of which was livestock related (n=141 wolves). The remaining mortalities were: 1 legal harvest in Canada, 11 car/train strikes, 13 illegal, 3 incidental and agency-related, 1 self defense, and 9 unknown. Twelve packs were removed due to chronic conflicts with livestock.

### Wolf Distribution

- Statewide, wolf distribution remained about the same, with one notable exception. A small pack was documented in the Snowies late in the year. New 2010 packs established primarily in the western third of the state. But wolves are great travelers and could show up anywhere in Montana. Many dispersal events were documented, and 21 new packs formed in 2010. Many others that started the year did not exist at the end of the year.
- About 90% of the Montana wolf population lives outside national parks on a combination of public and private lands.

## **Outreach Activities**

- Increasing public awareness of wolves and their management is a top priority for FWP. FWP works with local communities to incorporate wolves into the landscape and to strike the balance between wolves and people. Other FWP staff, USDA Wildlife Services personnel, and our tribal wildlife partners also provided information and did public outreach.
- Outreach efforts take many forms, including one-on-one conversations, media interviews, printed materials, documentary films, FWP Outdoor Reports and press releases, and formal presentations.
- FWP's wolf staff gave a minimum of 49 formal presentations to about 3265 people in 2010, but literally reached thousands more about wolf ecology, wolf-livestock interactions, wolf-big game interactions, human safety, Montana's wolf plan, federal delisting efforts, and more. Dozens of media interviews occurred, too.
- FWP's wolf management Web pages are very popular and visitors spend more time on the wolf pages than the average of all other FWP Web pages visited. In 2010, the FWP wolf web pages were visited about 117, 623 times, a 7% increase from 2009. Wolf pages were visited about 325 times per day on average.

## **Wolf-Livestock Interactions**

- Montana wolves routinely encounter livestock, though preying on them seems to be a learned behavior. Wolf depredation on livestock is difficult to predict in space and time.
- FWP and WS work together to reduce the risk of loss and address conflicts using a combination of non-lethal and lethal tools. With delisting, FWP decisions are guided by state laws, state regulations and the state plan. Conflicts are addressed on a case-by-case basis, striving to connect the agency response to the damage in space and time. This is similar to the approach taken when other wildlife species damage private property in Montana and lethal control is directed at the problem animals causing the damage.
- The Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program got underway in 2008. The goals are to decrease risk of livestock loss through proactive tools and to reimburse losses. The Governor-appointed Board meets twice a year. With a small Montana general fund appropriation and federal funding secured through a grant demonstration program, \$96,076 was paid in claims for confirmed and probable death losses in 2010. The total is expected to increase slightly as the final 2010 claims are processed.
- Confirmed cattle death losses decreased to 87 in 2010, and confirmed sheep death losses decreased to 64. Other confirmed livestock losses include: 3 llamas, 2 dogs, 3 goats, 1 horse, and 4 miniature horses. Other injury and death losses were not verified or were deemed "probable." Other impacts are difficult to quantify, but do occur.
- A total of 141 wolves were killed to prevent further depredations. Of those, private citizens killed 13 wolves caught actively chasing or attacking livestock either under the federal 10j regulation or the state defense of property law.

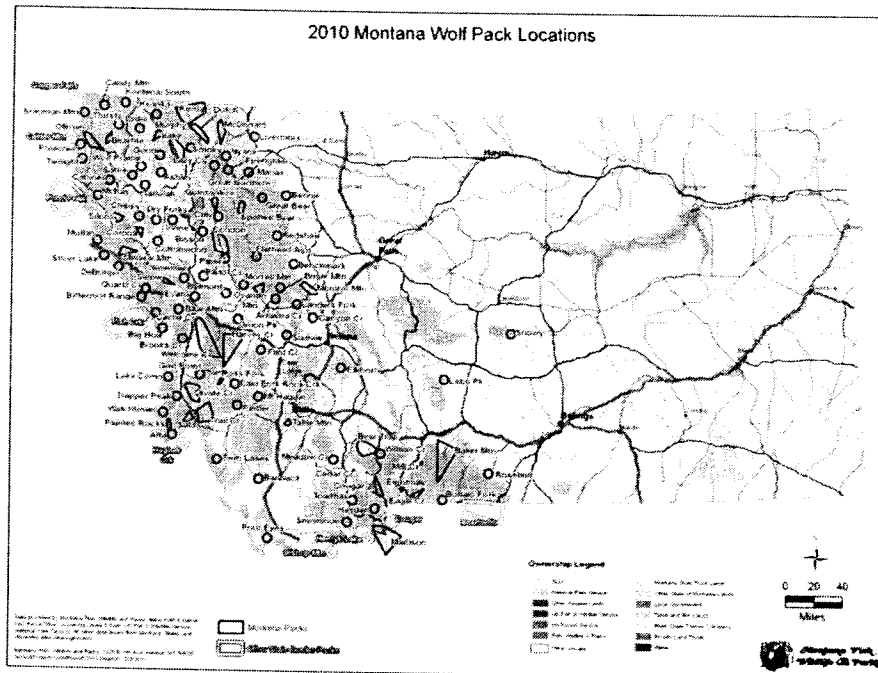
## **Funding, Delisting, and Litigation**

- With Montanans' support, FWP took on the new responsibility of wolf conservation and management in 2004, contingent on federal funding. Federal funding continued in 2010. Montana is focused on securing adequate funding from federal and private sources for the long term.
- Wolves were delisted for a second time in May 2009 and legal challenges resumed. Montana intervened in the lawsuit. The wolf was relisted on August 5, 2010. The judge ruled that delisting the northern Rocky Mountain wolf population may not move forward without Wyoming. The 2010 Montana wolf hunting season was canceled. FWP tried several administrative avenues to implement a hunting season in 2010, but all were denied by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- In October, FWP submitted a 10j proposal to remove wolves in the West Fork Bitterroot to address concerns about predation on the elk population. The 2008 10j regulation, however, has been challenged in federal court. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was still reviewing the proposal at year's end.



**See:** <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>

- to read and download the full Montana Wolf Conservation and Management 2010 Annual Report
- to report wolves and wolf sign
- to learn more about wolves, their management, and the state program



## Who Do I Contact?

### **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (to get information about wolves and wolf management):**

Lauri Hanauska-Brown  
Non-Game Coordinator, Helena  
406-444-5209 [lhanauska-brown@mt.gov](mailto:lhanauska-brown@mt.gov)

Kent Laudon  
Wolf Management Specialist, Kalispell  
406-250-5047 [klaudon@mt.gov](mailto:klaudon@mt.gov)

Liz Bradley  
Wolf Management Specialist, Missoula  
406-865-0017 [lbradley@mt.gov](mailto:lbradley@mt.gov)

Nathan Lance  
Wolf Management Specialist, Butte  
406-425-3355 [nlance@mt.gov](mailto:nlance@mt.gov)

Mike Ross  
Wolf Management Specialist, Bozeman  
406-581-3664 [mross@mt.gov](mailto:mross@mt.gov)

Abigail Nelson  
Wolf Management Specialist, Livingston  
406-600-5150 [abnelson@mt.gov](mailto:abnelson@mt.gov)

### **USDA Wildlife Services (to request investigations of injured or dead livestock):**

Kraig Glazier, Helena  
406-458-0106  
[Kraig.L.Glazier@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Kraig.L.Glazier@aphis.usda.gov)

John Steuber or Mike Foster, Billings  
406-657-6464  
[John.E.Steuber@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:John.E.Steuber@aphis.usda.gov) or [Mike.Foster@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Mike.Foster@aphis.usda.gov)

### **To Report a Dead Wolf or Possible Illegal Activity:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:  
Missoula, Montana: (406) 329-3000  
Casper, Wyoming: (307) 261-6365

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:  
1-800-TIP-MONT  
Nearest FWP Regional Office or game warden

### **To learn more about Montana's Livestock Reduction and Mitigation Program and the Board's work:**

George Edwards  
Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator, Helena  
406-444-5609 [gedwards@mt.gov](mailto:gedwards@mt.gov)



Post Office Box 1693  
Helena, MT 59624  
Phone (406) 442.1330  
Fax (406) 449.8606  
UPS Delivery: 7 Edwards St.



March 29, 2011

Senator Max Baucus  
United States Senator (D-MT)  
Senate Hart Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baucus

On behalf of the membership of the Montana Wool Growers Association (MWGA), I am writing to you today about two matters of importance and urgency to Montana's sheep and wool industry.

As you are aware, for the last several years, Montana's congressional delegation has secured funding for Tri-State Predator Control Program as administered by the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service division. This money is directed to Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming for the purpose of managing predator species with the goal of protecting the economic health of the livestock and hunting industries.

It has come to MWGA's attention that the recently passed Continuing Resolution eliminates the directed funding for this program for fiscal year '011, as well as the pay costs. In addition, MWGA understands that the elimination is retroactive to October 1, 2010. Thus, Wildlife Services will have to come up with savings to 'pay back' the expenses it has incurred in managing the federal government's animals, namely wolves.

This funding move is a terrible blow to Montana's farmers and ranchers, and comes at a time when losses from predators have, over the course of the last 5 years, increased more than 450%. In addition, the impact of this loss of money is already being felt on the ground. MWGA is being informed that Montana Wildlife Services personnel recently told Montana's farmers and ranchers that they do not have the funds to do 'flying' work. As a result, no response is being made to wolf depredations in parts of Montana at present! This is a complete breach of trust on the part of the federal government.

MWGA's membership very much appreciates the letter you sent to Secretary Vilsack on March 7, 2011 requesting that the Department find funding to replace these aforementioned monies. However, MWGA's membership asks you to be proactive, to take the additional step, and to reappropriate funds for this program in FY'11 and to allocate funding for this program in FY'12.

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Montana has delegation members sitting on both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. If the delegation comes together on this issue, this funding problem can be redressed legislatively and in short order. Consequently, on behalf of Montana's sheep industry, MWGA requests that you exercise your Article I spending powers and to fund predator management and damage work in Montana by refunding the Tri State Predator Control Program by adding a rider to the next CR. A similar copy of this letter is being sent to Representative Rehberg and Senator Tester.

In addition, given the increasing number of wolves on Montana's landscape and the corresponding number of livestock losses due to wolf kills, we ask that you secure additional federal funding for wolf depredation mitigation. You and Senator Tester were able previously able to secure roughly \$140,000 for wolf damage payments; we ask you to obtaining funding for this program both in FY'11 and FY'12. You are more than aware that Montana's livestock producers didn't ask for, nor want, the federal government to reintroduce the wolf; but, now that these predators are back in Montana, we ask that the federal government meet its responsibilities and to pay for the management of, and damage done by, these animals.

Thank you for your time and attention to the issues discussed herein. If you have any questions or need more information about these issues, you can contact me at 406-925-1745. The membership of MWGA very much appreciates your efforts on behalf of our industry.

Best wishes,



Jim Brown  
Director of Public Affairs

Cc: MWGA Board